

Cheat Sheet of Film Terms

animation	The process of assembling drawings to be photographed one frame at a time, to create an illusion of movement. Cartoons are best-known form of animation.
aural bridge	hearing the sound of the next shot before cutting to it - signals a transition
auteur	A director (or occasionally some other type of film-maker) with a recognisable style and view of life.
backlighting	Light from behind a person or object, sometimes creating a halo effect.
back (rear) projection	Adding a filmed background to live action, so it looks as though the action is taking place in that location.
body language	The way our feelings are expressed through our body.
close-up [C.U.]	A camera shot that seems to bring us close to the person or object being filmed; a shot of a person's face only is a 'close-up'. + 'Extreme close-up' [E.C.U.] or 'big close-up' [B.C.U.].
crane shot	A shot taken from a crane (a kind of high angle shot).
credits	The list of cast, crew, and other people involved in making a film. 'Head credits' at beginning, & 'tail credits'.
cross-cutting	The alternating of shots from two different sequences, often in different locales, suggesting they are taking place at the same time.
cut	The place where one shot as been spliced to another.
cut-away	A shot which briefly turns our attention away from the main action to someone or something on the sidelines.
dissolve	One image fades in while another fades out, so that they are superimposed for a few moments.
dolly	Any platform with wheels that allows the camera to be moved: 'dolly shot', 'tracking' or 'trucking' shot.

establishing shot	Usually a long-shot, it gives an overview of a scene so the audience is not confused about what is happening and where.
exposition	The basic information that must be supplied to an audience at the beginning of a story, so they can follow the story and feel involved with it.
extra	Someone acting a minor part, in a crowd scene for example.
fade-in	An image appears out of blackness, gradually brightening to full strength. Fade-out = image fades to black
film noir	A French term ('black cinema') for a genre of thrillers in which the universe is despairing and fatalistic.
fish eye lens	A very wide lens that distorts the image.
flashback	A return to a scene in the past. (A flash forward = a premonition of the future.)
focus	The sharpness of an image. To focus a camera is to adjust the lens so that it gives a sharper image.
footage	The amount of film used, or to be used (measured in feet or metres).
freeze frame	A single frame repeated many times so it looks like a still photograph.
grain	The texture of the film emulsion. A film image with coarse texture is said to be 'grainy'.
hand held camera	The camera is sometimes held in the hand, even though a tripod gives smoother results.
high key lighting	Bright lighting, usually provided by one source of light (the 'key light').
inpoint	The detail or image at the beginning of a scene, selected for its impact, or because it provides a smooth transition from the previous scene to the new scene. Compare OUTPOINT.
insert	A detail shot (e.g. a CU of a letter). Also used for a scene that detours from the immediate storyline.

jump cut	An abrupt transition between shots, usually deliberate, which is disorienting in terms of time and space; a startling transition that requires a leap of the imagination. Peter Jackson uses the term 'crash cut' for really shocking jumps.
location	A place, other than a studio, where a film is shot.
long lens	A lens with a long focal effect that has a telescopic effect.
long shot /L.S.	A shot from a distance - it shows a person from head to foot, and perhaps more than this.
master shot	A long take of an entire scene, into which other shots e.g. reaction shots, are cut.
matte	A process of combining several images during the printing process (e.g. to add a background).
morphing	Transforming from one image into another
outpoint	The final detail or image in a particular scene. It may sum up what has happened, add a touch of irony, or point towards the following scene. Compare 'INPOINT'.
out of shot [O.S.] off camera [O.C.]	A character speaks while the camera looks elsewhere. Not the same as voice over.
out-take	A take not used in the final version of a film.
over-shoulder shot	A camera position often used in dialogue scenes.
pan	The movement of the camera when it swivels from left to right or right to left
parallel montage	Two scenes that the editor has alternated. Also known as 'cross-cutting'.
point-of-view shot	[POV shot] A shot in which the camera is associated with the eyes of a character ('this is what s/he sees').
pull (rack) focus	To shift focus from one part of a scene to another (also known as 'follow focus' or 'rack focus')

reaction shot	A shot that shows a person's reaction to what happened in the previous shot. (It is known as a 'noddy' if the person is merely nodding, like a television interviewer!)
reverse angle	A shot from the opposite side. When two people are talking, there is often a 'shot and reverse shot' alternation.
rough cut	The first edited version of the film, like a rough copy. It is revised to become the final cut.
rushes (or dailies)	'Takes' rushed back from the laboratory so the film-makers can check that they got what they wanted.
screenplay	A film or television script.
set-up	The position of the camera and lighting, selected for a particular shot.
shallow focus	Objects in foreground will be sharp; those in background will be blurred or softened. Opposite = deep focus.
shooting/ filming	The 'shoot' is the period of time spent filming.
shot	A film is made up of many different shots. During the shooting of a film, a shot ends when the camera is turned off. Each shot involves a different camera set-up. During and after the editing of the film a shot ends where the editor has cut it off. See 'TAKE'.
side lighting	light coming from one side – can create sense of volume, bring out surface tensions, fill in unlit areas.
Skycam	A lightweight camera is suspended via wires and pulleys and controlled from a computer.
sound mix	The combination of different elements (dialogue, music, sound effects) to make up the sound track
sound effects	Sounds other than words.
special effects [SFX]	Creating illusions by the use of trick photography, miniature models and various types of equipment. A bomb can explode; a flying saucer can appear etc, thanks to SFX.
split screen	Two or more separate images within the same frame.

Steadicam	The camera is attached to a vest on the camera operator who can then move it without jerkiness.
still	A single photograph, the enlargement of one frame.
storyboard	A script presented as a series of drawings and captions.
sub-text	A person's private thoughts and feelings which may be different from those expressed publicly.
subjective shot	A point of view shot, sometimes distorted to emphasise the character's state of mind.
tail	The end of a film.
take	One attempt at a shot. To get the effect wanted, the director may ask for more than one version (or 'take'). Same as 'shot' but it refers more narrowly to the period when the film is being made.
telephoto lens	A long lens with a telescopic effect.
texture	A term used to refer to: (1) the actual physical look of a film image, those qualities that allow us to distinguish it from a video, image or an oil painting, or other kind of image. (2) richness of detail – clouds, faces, wind tugging at clothes, cars passing in the background, etc. To respond to texture is to notice not just the main meaning or the main objects in a film scene, but also to notice the many details, colours and surfaces.
threnody	an unnerving sound, signalling a change of mood (threnody = song of lament)
tighter shot	A closer shot, leaving less space around the people or objects on whom the camera is concentrating.
tilt shot	The stationary camera starts at the top of an object/figure and scans down to the bottom [TILT DOWN] or at the bottom and scans to the top [TILT UP]. Only the lens moves; when the whole camera is lifted = crane shot.
tracking shot	the camera moves on a 'dolly', enabling it to follow people who are moving along.

two-shot	A shot in which two people are shown (cameramen also speak of 'one-shot' and 'three-shot').
video	Television filming. The images are recorded not on film stock, but on videotape.
visuals	The images of a film.
voice over [V.O.]	Commentary by an unseen narrator.
wide-angle lens	A lens with a broad angle of view, increasing the sense of depth and distance.
wipe	An optical effect in which one image appears to push the previous image off the screen.
zoom	A lens that can be adjusted from 'wide-angle' to 'telephoto'. Such a lens can 'zoom in' or 'zoom out' (seem to move closer or further away from an object).

Iconography: those objects or images in a film which have a potential meaning (often linked to GENRE) - for example the iconographic elements of a conventional Gangster film might be Trilby Hats, Pinstripe Suits, Molls, Hoods, Guns, Mafia, Sedans, Italian-Americans etc. A good comparison to look at would be The Godfather and The Soprano's.

tie-in: a product produced in connection with a film (merchandising); Tie-ins can generate a vast amount of money for the producers and are becoming increasingly diverse in kind; XBOX games, mobile phone games, Apps, clothes, toys etc.

femme fatale: a female character who uses her sexual power to trap male characters (often). A good example would be Double Indemnity or LA Confidential.

chiaroscuro lighting: describes highly contrasting lighting, which gives deep shadows and bright highlights.

vertical integration: this describes the ownership of all stages of film production, distribution and exhibition by one company. This was particularly prevalent during the 'golden age of the Hollywood Studio System (up until 1948) when the 'Paramount Decree' forced the break up of this monopoly by the BIG FIVE major studios.